

Mr. Paine Tells His Story

ROADS OF ADVENTURE. By Ralph D. Paine. Boston and New York. Houghton Mifflin Company.

HERE is a book that must stir the envy of any man who has not wholly outlived the nomad instincts and adventurous longings of boyhood, when the Soldier of Fortune was the true demi-god, and mutinies and scuttled ships and buried treasure were the only themes for a red blooded tale. Most of us accepted the melancholy fact that the modern world had outgrown the picturesque lawlessness of earlier centuries, and that piracy, blockade running and the fostering of revolutions, however fascinating, were impractical and out of date careers. But here is the story of a man who in the prosaic fourth quarter of the nineteenth century lived a life of adventure as gorgeous in its bizarre variety, its imminent peril, its wealth of exotic color as ever fell to the lot of those old time rovers of the Spanish main.

It would be unfair, however, to over-emphasize this special aspect of a book which, whatever else it contains, is primarily the frank, simple, unassuming autobiography of a man who for a generation was one of the best war correspondents of his time and an exponent of indomitable



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old fashioned Americanism. Mr. Paine was one of those fortunate men whose life vocation seems to choose them in advance, without hesitation or debate. Even before the beginning of his college career he served an apprenticeship as reporter on a Jacksonville newspaper. From the very first he paid his own way through Yale by letters on athletics and other newspaper work; and by his junior year he was also putting a sister through college. The early chapters devoted to those college years are of special interest because they cover in part the period before athletics had come to play such a significant part in undergraduate life; the years when the famous "Bob" Cook stroke had made the Yale crew an almost sure winner over Harvard; the years that witnessed the genesis of what is known as the "Yale spirit" in athletics. Mr. Paine, thanks to his splendid physical height and weight, enjoyed the rare distinction of rowing as a freshman on the university crew; and seldom, if ever, has any college man preserved down into middle life so keen and so youthful a memory of the early thrills and anguish of victory and of defeat as Mr. Paine has embodied in his narrative of the two races, in which he bore his share of the laurels and the disappoint-

ment. The third year an obstinate five pounds too much of that splendid brawn, five pounds which no amount of heroic training could reduce, forced his withdrawal just before the 'race and taught him the hardest element of the Yale spirit, cheerful sacrifice.

The career of a war correspondent naturally covers a wide field, and Mr. Paine has enjoyed the privilege of being in the thick of every interesting embroilment, big and little, that has come along in the last twenty-five years. Nevertheless, obeying the human tendency to revert with a special tenderness to one's first love, Mr. Paine has gone back with such obvious delight, such contagious enthusiasm, to his early adventures as correspondent for the New York American with filibustering expeditions to Cuba, and later with the American Squadron during the Spanish War, that this volume will be especially remembered as a sort of unofficial and inside history of the liberation of Cuba.

It may be remembered that in those far off times a big fair was held at Madison Square Garden, and a resplendent, gold-plated sword was voted on, at so much a vote, to be given to the greatest living soldier, and "Gen. Maximo Gomez won in a walk." Mr. Hearst bought this sword for \$2,000, and was looking for somebody foolish enough to try to carry it to Gomez. Mr. Paine happened along in the nick of time, accepted the commission, and presently found himself on board that historic trouble maker, the Three Friends, sent out from Florida with a cargo of Mauser rifles and nitroglycerin. The story of the adventures of the Three Friends, which was merely a big, sea going towboat, reads like a modern prose Odyssey, of the sort that Joseph Conrad and William McFee have never surpassed in their most audacious imaginings. One would like to linger over the details of this voyage, and each and every figure that made up the extraordinary and motley personnel, beginning with the inimitable Capt. Johnny O'Brien, epic hero of many wild voyages and with a price on his head, yet pictured unforgettably as "a serene little man with a mop of gray hair and a pugnacious Irish face." But what one remembers, because it made history and because it stands unique in the history of modern times, is that when the Three Friends, stealing her midnight way into the Rio San Juan, unexpectedly roused up a lurking Spanish gunboat and precipitously fled across the moonlit expanse of the Caribbean, pursued by wild Spanish gunnery, she fired a few parting shots from the one old gun she had on board, and left the patrol boat crippled, with its pilot house shot away.

"We didn't fire the shot that was heard around the world," said McCready, "but it's a safe bet that it stirs up a few echoes in Washington and Madrid. That was piracy, old man. We shot up a friendly power, the same being the Kingdom of Spain. . . . Pirates according to Hoyle—not a doubt of it."

"Bully, isn't it, Mac?" said I, with worthy pride. "Probably the only living pirates! Think of taking your grandchildren on your knee and letting 'em play with your long white whis-

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